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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACTS OF VERB CONJUGATION IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH AMONG TVET STUDENTS AT FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC ILARO, OGUN STATE.

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the variation in conjugation of verb in English and French and their respective complexities among Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) students at the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. While these languages belong to Indo-European family, their verb conjugation is quite different in various aspects of learning and usage. French being a Romance language has more complex conjugation with numerous verb endings based on tense, mood, and subject, while English as a Germanic language uses more simplified conjugation structure relying on the auxiliary verb. This study adopted qualitative and quantitative analysis to pinpoint and analyze verb conjugation complexity which may pose the challenges and data were obtained from 1000 scripts of students from the school of Engineering, Management studies, Environmental studies, and Pure and Applied Sciences. The findings showed that while French verb conjugation poses challenges with a variety of ending depending on the subject, agreement in number and gender (je, tu, elle, il, nous, vous, ils, elles), English is simpler and less complicated.

KEYWORDS: Comparative analysis, English and French verb conjugation, impact, TVET students

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines how verb conjugation influences the grammatical competence and fluency of TVET students in English and French. Verb conjugation is crucial for language acquisition, impacting both written and spoken communication, especially in technical and vocational

education, where students must understand specialized terminology and instructions. English verb conjugation is relatively simple, with minor suffix changes, while French conjugation is more complex, involving multiple forms and irregular patterns (Krashen, 1982; Carter, 2012; Buckley, 2014). Research highlights the challenges students face in mastering French verbs compared to English.

According to Harley (2006), the English verb system is characterized by its simplicity with a basic distinction between regular and irregular verbs. In contrast, the French verb system is described by Fraser (2010) as highly intricate, involving three main conjugation groups and a wide range of irregular verbs that do not follow consistent pattern.

Smith (2017) highlighted the importance of teaching strategies tailored to the specific challenges of verb conjugation in each language. Understanding the conjugation of verbs is essential for mastering any language while English verb conjugation is relatively straightforward, French verb conjugation involves more complex rules and irregularities. This study explores these differences and their impact on students learning experiences and also seeks to identify the root causes of these difficulties and propose effective solutions. This comparative analysis highlights the challenges and benefits faced by students learning these two languages, providing insights into effective teaching methodologies and language learning strategies.

OBJECTIVES

This study aims to:

1. Examine the structural differences between French and English verb conjugation system (tense, mood and aspects).
2. Evaluate the challenges faced by learners of French and English due to verb conjugation complexities including common errors and strategies for effective learning and teaching methods for improving verb conjugation skills.
3. Assess communicative impacts in French and English particularly in terms of clarity, formality and the expression of temporal nuances and speaker intentions.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive and comparative research design with a mixed-method approach to examine the impacts of verb conjugation in French and English. Data were collected from 1,000 scripts of ND1, ND2, HND1, and HND2 students across Engineering, Management Studies, Environmental Studies, and Pure and Applied Sciences. Structured questionnaires (1,300 administered, 1,000 retrieved) provided quantitative data, while in-depth interviews gathered qualitative insights. The study ensured reliability and validity through pre-testing with language lecturers. Quantitative data were analyzed statistically, and qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify common themes and patterns.

Table 1: Demographic profile of Respondents.

This summary highlights the key findings from our questionnaire, which gathered responses from 1000 participants. The results are presented by frequency and percentage to provide a clear overview of the responses.

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n=1000)	Percentage (%)
Age Gender	Under – 18	50	5
	18-24	500	50
	25-30	250	25
	31-35	150	15
	36 and above	50	5
	Male	600	60
	Female	380	38

Schools	Other	20	2
	Engineering	300	30
	Management studies	250	25
	Applied sciences	200	20
	Environmental Studies	150	15
	Other	100	10
Level of study	ND 1	250	25
	ND 2	250	25
	HND 1	250	25
	HND 2	250	25
Primary language	Yoruba	400	40
	Igbo	300	30
	Hausa	200	20
	Other	100	10
Previous language learning	Basic	400	40
	Intermediate	300	30
	Advanced	200	20
	None	100	10

Table 2: Challenges in verb conjugation

Table 3: Common challenges in verb conjugation

Difficulty level	French (n=1000)	Percentage (%)	English (n=1000)	Percentage (%)
Very difficult	350	35	150	15
Difficult	400	40	250	25
Neutral	150	15	200	20
Easy	70	7	250	25
Very Easy	30	3	150	15
Challenges	French (n=1000)	Percentage (%)	English (n=1000)	Percentage (%)
Irregular verbs	700	70	500	50
Multiple conjugation pattern	650	65	—	—
Gender Agreements	500	50	—	—
Tense usage	450	45	400	40
Subject verb agreement	—	—	300	30
Uses of auxiliary verbs	—	—	250	25

Table 4: Impact on language learning outcomes

Frequency of impact	French (n=1000)	Percentage (%)	English (n=1000)	Percentage (%)
Always affected	200	20	100	10
Often affected	350	35	200	20
Sometimes affected	300	30	400	40
Rarely affected	100	10	200	20
Never affected	50	5	100	10

Table 5: Impact on overall proficiency

Level of impact	French (n=1000)	Percentage (%)	English (n=1000)	Percentage (%)
Very significant	250	25	200	20
Significant	400	40	300	30
Moderate	200	20	300	30
Slight	100	10	150	15
Not significant	50	5	50	5

Table 6: Strategies for overcoming challenges

Strategies	French (n=1000)	Percentage (%)	English (n=1000)	Percentage (%)
Regular practice	600	60	500	50
Mnemonic devices	450	45	300	30
Interactive learning tools	500	50	450	45

Group study	300	30	350	35
Tutoring/ Extra classes	250	25	200	20

Table 7: Effectiveness of Digital tools

Effectiveness Level	French (n=1000)	Percentage (%)	English (n=1000)	Percentage (%)
Very effective	300	30	250	25
Effective	400	40	350	35
Neutral	200	20	250	25
Ineffective	70	7	100	10
Very ineffective	30	3	50	5

Table 8: Helpfulness of Teachers

Helpfulness Level	French (n=1000)	Percentage (%)	English (n=1000)	Percentage (%)
Very helpful	400	40	350	35
Helpful	350	35	400	40
Neutral	150	15	200	20
Unhelpful	70	7	30	3
Very unhelpful	30	3	20	2

3. Results and Discussion

These tables summarize the quantitative results of the study, highlighting data from 1000 respondents. The demographic analysis reveals a diverse sample of TVET students, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their challenges.

Challenges in verb conjugation reveal common difficulties in French and English. In French, students struggle with irregular verbs, multiple conjugation patterns, and gender agreement, corroborating O'Neill (2012). Additionally, French verbs must agree in number and gender with their subjects, increasing complexity. In English, challenges include irregular verbs and tense consistency.

The impact on language learning outcomes shows a significant correlation between verb conjugation proficiency and overall language skills. Mastery of conjugation enhances performance in reading, writing, and speaking.

Effective strategies for overcoming these challenges include regular practice, mnemonic devices, and interactive tools such as language apps. Teachers play a crucial role by providing clear explanations and personalized feedback. Some students benefited from additional tutoring and extra classes. Qualitative analysis, including pre-tests, interviews, teaching, and post-tests, further highlights verb conjugation difficulties, particularly in French. Students expressed frustration with numerous irregular verbs and the need to memorize multiple patterns. Howard (2011) notes that French conjugation, with its tense, mood, and subject pronoun variations, is particularly challenging. Gender agreement adds complexity, leading to confusion and errors. While English conjugation is simpler, irregular verbs still pose challenges, especially for learners with limited exposure. David Crystal (2012) notes that while English conjugation is relatively straightforward, it requires understanding irregularities and context. Lightbown (2014) highlights the high cognitive load and memorization demands of French conjugation, particularly for TVET students with limited exposure. Additionally, students who struggled with conjugation reported lower confidence in speaking and writing French. Difficulties in conjugation correlated with poor performance in reading and listening. While English verb issues were less severe, they still affected written assignments and class participation due to fear of grammatical errors.

The findings align with existing literature, confirming the complexity of French verb conjugation compared to English. The relative simplicity of English conjugation allows quicker mastery, enabling a focus on advanced language skills earlier in the curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following pedagogical strategies:

1. Regularly, incorporating interactive exercises and digital tools to make learning engaging may help students in better understanding and retain verb conjugation rules.
2. Providing regular and personalized feedback through digital tools will address individual challenges.
3. Developing specialized teaching materials that address the unique difficulties of French and English verb conjugation.
4. Contextualized language use should incorporate integrating language learning with vocational subjects to provide practical and relevant contexts for language use as supported by the theories of Context Based Instruction (CBI) advocated by scholars like Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989).
5. Group study sessions and collaboration can provide peer support and allows sharing learning experiences to foster a supportive learning environment where student can learn from each other's strength.

The significant impact of verb conjugation proficiency on overall language skills underscores the need for focused teaching strategies that provide clear explanations and additional resources for practicing verb conjugation.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed significant insight into the linguistics challenges and underscored the importance of understanding the distinct nature of verb conjugation in both languages and its effect on TVET students' proficiency and learning outcomes. Verb conjugation in French and English presents unique challenges due to their inherent grammatical structures. French, with its complex conjugation patterns including variations based on tense, mood, and subject pronoun poses greater difficulty among TVET students while English, simpler in comparison still demands attention to irregular verbs and auxiliary constructions which can confuse learners. However, to improve language acquisition among TVET students, it is crucial to implement targeted instructional strategies which include group activities, digital platforms such as language learning apps and online resources has been increasingly recognized in facilitating language acquisition. Godwin Jones (2011) submits that tools offer immediate feedback and allow for individualized learning paths which are particularly beneficial for mastering complex conjugation rules. Also, peer tutoring can enhance students' linguistic proficiency and overall academic success.

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